

Kyodan

Kyodan News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
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A REPORT FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 15th. General Assembly of The United Church of Christ in Japan met from October 21 to October 24 in Tokyo. The theme for the next two years was adopted as follows:

THE CHURCH MILITANT

ADVANCE THROUGH WITNESS IN LIFE

Following the Communion Service one of the first items on the agenda was the election of the Moderator, the Vice-Moderator, and the Secretary. The present officers, MASAHISA SUZUKI, MODERATOR

KIYOSHI II, VICE-MODERATOR

TOMOMI KIMURA, SECRETARY

were reelected for another two year term. These gentlemen will serve until the General Assembly scheduled for 1970.

Since the General Assembly is the highest legislative body in the Kyodan many important items were discussed and were either approved, disapproved, or tabled for further study. We would list the following as highlights of the Assembly.

--The report and recommendations of the Committee on the Study of the Structure of the Church.

Sogo--Consolidation--one of the three steps charted by the 1966 General Assembly to achieve the "Kyodan of Tomorrow" moved from draft to fact when the 1968 General Assembly approved a radically new framework in which to carry on the work and relationships of the national offices, districts, and local churches.

The basic principle underlying the restructuring is the idea that the national offices of the Kyodan exist to serve the District, and the District offices to serve the local church.

A primary purpose of the new structure is to release into the actual working life of the church as much as possible of the energy, funds, and man hours heretofore absorbed by committee work. National committees will be fewer in number and have fewer members. Their responsibility will be largely that of policy-making, implementation to be delegated to staff members in the General Secretariat.

The new structure also located responsibility for much program planning and program execution closer to the scene of action by transferring to the Districts many of the activities formerly conducted by the national offices.

Key points in the restructuring are:

- 1) A drastic reduction in the number of national committees, in the membership of the committees, and therefore in the total number of hours spent in committee meetings.
- 2) A clear distinction between policy-making and policy-implementing.
- 3) The establishment of subcommittees on evangelism, social concern, education and ecumenical ministries under a Commission on Mission of the church, thereby emphasizing that these are all facets of the church's total mission and inter-related.
- 4) The location of responsibility and resources for many activities at the District rather than the national level.
- 5) Concentration of the work of national committees and staff members on liaison functions or on those activities which the Districts cannot do for themselves--namely, theological training, overseas ministry, ministerial qualifications, and faith and order.

Ten national committees, commissions and subcommittees replace twenty-one in existence before the restructuring. The staff of the General Secretariat, charged with implementing plans, will be composed of departments of finance, and mission, a division of general offices, and the Board of Publication. A General Secretary will be in charge of the General Secretariat.

Along with the transfer of many responsibilities to the Districts will be a readjustment of the budget allotting 6% of a total 10% local church assessment to the Districts and 4% to the national offices, a reversal of the present ratio. However, 1% of the 6% will be put into a special fund for the use of the less financial able districts.

The restructure will go into effect in April of 1969. It represents the first major realignment of offices and committees since the church was formed in 1941, a union of some thirty denominations representing various episcopal, congregational and presbyterian forms of church polity.

At the national level, the three committees which will have primarily policy and evaluative functions are; a committee on Faith and Order, a Committee on Ministerial Qualifications, a Committee on Finance. Commissions which will work closely with the Districts include Commission on the Mission of the Church composed of sub-committees on evangelism, education, social concern and ecumen-

ical ministeries, and a commission for the ministry. Decisions of the committees will be carried out by secretaries on the staff of the secretariat.

--The Coming Together of The United Church of Christ in Okinawa and the Kyodan.

After several years of discussion and preparation this item was presented to the Japan Kyodan Assembly and to a special General Assembly held by the Okinawa Kyodan and was unanimously adopted by both bodies. Telegrams were exchanged and in February a special meeting will be held to officially merge these two groups. Okinawa will thus become a District in the Japan Kyodan and will be entitled to seat delegates in the General Assembly.

For many reasons this is not the small being taken into the large but it is the prayer of all people concerned that this union shall pave the way not only for Christian fellowship but that the common issues confronting the two societies can be resolved through common action.

We, of Japan, feel that Okinawa with its own culture and character has many things to bring into this union and we expectantly await their full participation.

--Overseas Visitors to the Assembly included:

Bishop Fritz H. Pyen, The Methodist Church of Korea; Rev. Moon Hwan Choi, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea; Rev. P. D. Miller, Moderator, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.; Rev. M. C. Chong, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Formosa; Rev. Wan Suck Hahn, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea; Rev. Won Yong Kang, Vice-Moderator of the EACC; Rev. Darley Downs, The United Church of Christ. Many other overseas churches had appointed personnel in Japan to serve as fraternal delegates.

--The election of the General Secretary.

One of the most important posts in the new structure is that of the General Secretary. Elected for a four year term of office was: REV. TORU TAKAKURA. Mr. Takakura, son of a minister, has had long experience as a pastor in the Church and for four years has been the Executive Secretary of the Committee on Evangelism. Well qualified for this position the Kyodan is happy to introduce Mr. Takakura to our friends around the world.

--The Board of Publications has a new General Secretary REV. MASAO TSUBOI, at present one of the Kyodan secretaries elected to the post succeeding Rev. ISABURO TAKAYANAGI.

